

## SELF-GUIDED TOUR

# WELCOME TO THE GARDEN

*Please enjoy this 30-minute introductory tour of the Garden created by our Volunteer Garden Guides.*

***Explore and learn about our history and facilities, and discover the beauty of our diverse botanical collections.***

Our collections celebrate the richness and variety of the plant kingdom, and the many ways plants can be beneficial to and enjoyed by people.

Before you start the tour, take time to look at the **VISITOR CENTRE**, which opened in October 2011. Its design, inspired by organic forms such as an orchid leaf, presents a harmonious balance between architecture and landscape. Most importantly, you are standing in a “green” building which uses less energy, less water, fewer natural resources, produces less waste and creates a healthier, non-toxic indoor environment.

**To BEGIN** your tour of this part of the Garden, proceed onto the **PLAZA** overlooking Livingstone Lake. The latter was named for W.C.(Bill)Livingstone, Vancouver's Deputy Superintendent of Parks in the 1960s and 1970s, who designed the lakes and rock formations for which VanDusen is noted. His work and that of Roy Forster, our first curator, combined an outstanding plant collection with superb landscape design. Previously a golf course, the Garden was formally opened as a botanical garden in August 1975. It was named for Mr. W. J. VanDusen, a philanthropist whose financial contribution facilitated the purchase of this land from its owner, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.

**LIVINGSTON LAKE** is one of several man-made water features in the Garden. Excavations of the larger lakes revealed an ancient sea bed which once covered much of BC's lower mainland about 12,000 years ago. This Garden is now 400 feet above sea level, the second-highest point in Vancouver. You may also wish to visit Queen Elizabeth Park, which is a close walk from the Garden and the highest point in the city.

Follow the **ramp down to your right** and take the path parallel to the lake. Surrounding

Michael Dennis' **TWO SCULPTURES, CONFIDENCE** made from western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), is a group of ginkgo trees (*Ginkgo biloba*). These “living fossils” were widespread during the age of the dinosaurs but are now nearly extinct in the wild. They survive today because they were valued and cultivated by Buddhist monks in China, where their edible seeds are considered a delicacy. Ginkgo is also used as an herbal medicine to improve circulation and memory. They are also pollution-tolerant.

**Follow the path** which passes by magnolias and tree peonies on your right and a possible view of turtles resting on rocks on the opposite shore on your left, to an intersection. Before you lies **ROY R. FORSTER CYPRESS POND** with its **FLOATING BRIDGE**. Beyond the bridge are bald or swamp cypress trees (*Taxodium distichum*). These deciduous conifers produce delicate lime-green needle-like leaves in the spring which turn a rusty gold in fall, making this a particularly lovely vista. If you have a chance to get a closer look, you will see their porous root growths or “knees” protruding from the soil or water around their trunk bases. Bald cypress is a well-adapted swamp tree native to the southeastern United States.

**Turn left and cross the stone bridge** leading into an area featuring plants from the Mediterranean. Dominating are the true cedars, such as the cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) and the blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* Glauca Group). Lavender, rosemary, sage and thyme are among the many scented plants that originate from the Mediterranean region. Their aromatic oils help protect them from the long hot Mediterranean summers by re-duc-ing evaporation from the leaves. Turn left at the next intersection to enter the Southern Hemisphere Garden. Plants in the southern hemisphere have evolved separately from those of the northern hemisphere. Many of the summer bulbs planted here originate from South Africa. Among the trees you will see in this area are: the somewhat scraggly Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus antarctica*), the monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) from Chile and SW Argentina, with its unique leather-like spiky branches and the southern beech (*Nothofagus domeyii*), a striking evergreen native to Chile. The tree that stands out as the largest in this area is the western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), which is a survivor from the Garden’s golf course days and is native to our area, not the southern hemisphere. It is

not a true cedar but was given this common name because its wood is similarly decay-resistant and a good source of timber.

To enjoy a photo-worthy vista, **continue straight ahead on this path and up the stone steps** leading to the tip of the **Southern Peninsula**. Here you will be able to see both the new and old Visitor Centres. **Return to the main path, turn left and proceed across the zig-zag bridge**. You may see some carp swimming nearby or catch a glimpse of waterfowl or herons. Giant Gunnera from Chile, may be in leaf along the shorelines. If so, look for their alien-looking flower stalks hiding among spiky stems.

**Walk up the little hill and turn right** at the stone **Grotto** made of black basalt conglomerate. Walk through this tunnel into the **Heather Garden**. Here you will see an example of the naturalistic landscape style developed in England in the eighteenth century. It features heather and associated plants, such as Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and birch (*Betula* species). The pines surrounding the Heather Garden are a few of the over 110 species of pine (*Pinus* species), all native to the northern hemisphere. Look closely at the heather plants. Heather (*Calluna* species) has scale-like leaves and blooms in late summer;

the heaths (*Erica* species) have needle-like leaves and provide almost year-round bloom. Apparently, sheep prefer to graze on *Calluna*!

**Follow either trail** to end up at the stone shelter constructed of brown basalt and fashioned to resemble a “Crofter's Cottage”. Cross the stone bridge and turn left. Ahead is the **Perennial Garden**. Left is an example of a more formal design with a clipped hedge acting as a backdrop to grouped perennials. On the right, the design is more informal. Beyond the rock wall stretches the Great Lawn, one of the few visible reminders of the golf fairways from pre-Garden days. Many a wedding and event takes place here.

**Return to the path you entered from, turn right and stay on the straighter path**. Soon you will pass by our well-known **Laburnum Walk**, which is aglow with golden chains of flowers in the spring. Next on your right is the **Heritage Rose Collection**. Continue on to the stone archway and descend into the **Formal Rose Garden**. Bronze busts of David Douglas, an important Scottish plant collector in the 1800s and Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist who developed the binomial system of plant nomenclature still used universally, look out over this area and towards a beautiful sun-dial, created by Gerhard Class.

A golden catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea'), planted by dignitaries on 30 August 1975, VanDusen Botanical Garden's opening day, grows at a junction of paths on the right just beyond the metal archway leading out of the **Formal Rose Garden**. Follow the pathway farthest to the left after this tree, walk past the **Herb and Fragrance Gardens** and proceed to the **Phyllis Bentall Garden** surrounding a pool featuring waterlilies (*Nymphaea* species). Hardy waterlilies require still waters in which to grow, and unlike certain tropical varieties, are exclusively day bloomers opening at about noon and closing as the sun goes down. This garden area also features several plants, primarily shrubs, whose fragrance fills the evenings.

Our temperate **Carnivorous Plant Collection** is located in the pots on the side of the Phyllis Bentall Garden facing Livingstone Lake. Carnivorous plants are found primarily in acidic bogs and wetlands in nutrient-poor, but insect-rich environments. They have evolved the amazing ability to collect missing nutrients by capturing and digesting insects.

To **return to the Visitor Centre**, take **the path down towards Livingstone Lake**. Enjoy a refreshing drink at the BC jade water fountain

and then turn right and cross the wooden bridge.

### **THANK YOU for visiting!**

We hope you have enjoyed your tour and will come again. The Garden’s 55 acres (22 hectares) transform with changing vistas and wondrous plants with every passing season.

Don’t forget to check out the **Cascadia garden** on your left as you leave the Visitor Centre and walk towards the parking lot.

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